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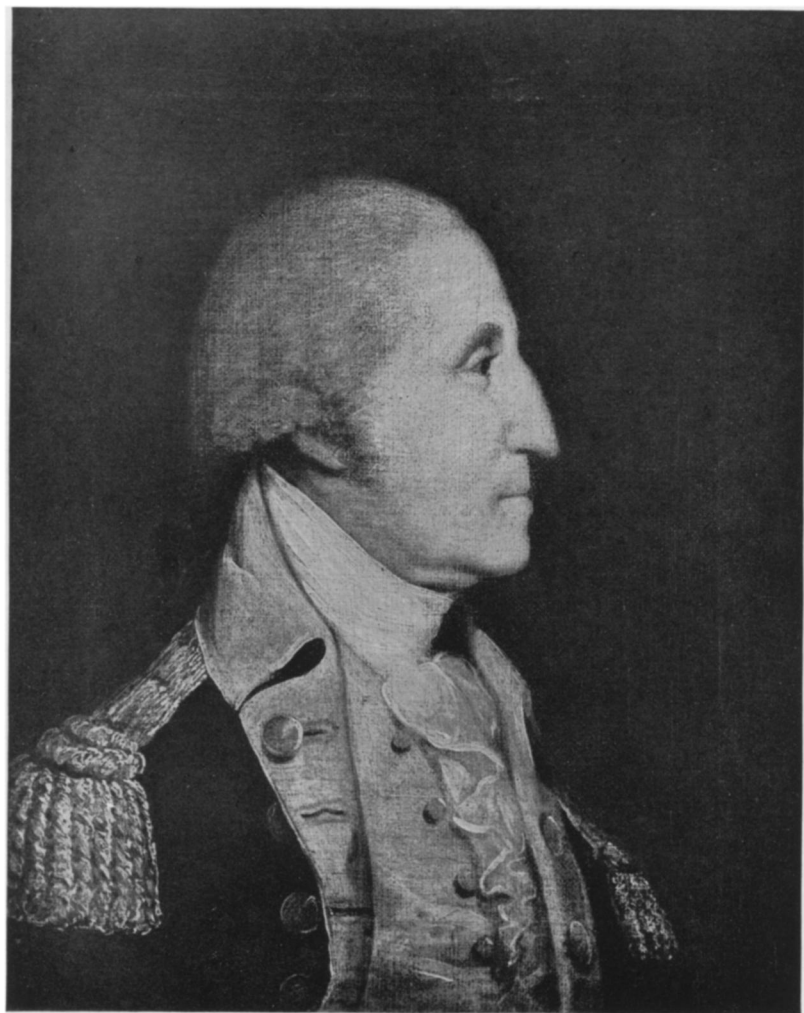
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PORTRAIT OF WASHINGTON

By Joseph Wright

From the Hinman B. Hurlbut Purchase Fund

THE BULLETIN OF THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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JOSEPH WRIGHT'S PORTRAIT OF WASHINGTON

The bust portrait of Washington painted by Joseph Wright which has for several years been hanging in Gallery I on loan, has recently been purchased by the Museum and constitutes an important artistic and historic addition to the Museum's collection of early American art. It carries with it an interesting pedigree which goes back to about 1815 when Thomas Shields, a tavern keeper of Alexandria, Virginia, and an ancestor of its late owner, bought the picture at an auction in Alexandria. Shields was a Mason and being a member of the same Masonic lodge to which Washington belonged and thus thoroughly familiar with Washington's appearance was attracted to the painting by its quality as an accurate likeness. His opinion was endorsed many years later by Washington's step-son, G. W. Parke Custis, who saw the picture shortly before his death in 1857 and declared it a more correct and faithful expression of Washington's face than any of the numerous portraits he had seen. From a comparison of it with the Houdon cast the measurements are said to be identical. The picture passed to Mr. Shields' daughter and then to her son, the late G. L. McKean of Chicago, from whose widow the Museum bought it.

When or where the picture was painted is not known but 1790 is thought to be its approximate date. Wright drew and etched a profile portrait of Washington in that year and it is said painted a portrait of him at that time. The head in the painting is the same as that shown by the etching but in the latter the body as well as the head is shown in profile while in the painting only the head is thus shown.

The painting, which is on canvas and measures twenty-one inches in height by seventeen in width, depicts the Father of his Country at about the age of fifty-eight years, gazing with a bright eye directly towards the spectator's right with a calm and cheerful expression. He is dressed in military costume with a white muslin neckcloth and frill. The hair is powdered and brushed back from his temples and tied with a black queue bow. The plain background is a brownish color.

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In 1884 it was placed by Mr. McKean in the United States National Museum in Washington, where, surrounded by numerous Washington relics, it remained for several years. It was exhibited at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876 and again in that city in 1886 at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. In 1889 during the Washington Centennial it was hung in the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. It was sent to the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 and two years later was shown at the Chicago Art Institute. It was reproduced as the frontispiece of the *Century Magazine* for May, 1890, and also in *McClure's Magazine* for February, 1897, and in the "History of the Centennial Celebration of the Inauguration of George Washington" edited by Clarence W. Bowen, Esq., in 1892. It was also reproduced in the *Chicago Times-Herald* for February 22, 1897. It was engraved by W. Evans and published by Thomas Medland in London in March, 1800.

Joseph Wright, the artist, was a son of Mrs. Patience Wright, a woman celebrated in her time as a modeller of profile wax portraits, and was born in Bordentown, New Jersey, in 1756. In his youth he was taken to England by his mother and received instruction from Benjamin West and John Hoppner, the latter marrying Wright's sister. Later he went to France whence after a short sojourn he returned to America in 1782 and died at the early age of thirty-seven in Philadelphia during an epidemic of yellow fever in 1793. He painted other portraits of Washington and in the opinion of the late Charles Henry Hart their historical importance is perhaps greater than that of any other of the numerous portraits of the first president. He also painted a portrait of Mrs. Washington.

L. P.

CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE PAINTINGS

The Special Exhibition of Contemporary Japanese Paintings, shown in Gallery VIII, strikes a new note of response from artist and layman. The thirty pictures which make up the group were painted within the last year; therefore, they express not only the latest modern tendencies, but also a latent ancient spirit which is one of the salient characteristics of the school they represent. The *Bijutsu-in*, or Fine Arts Academy, is the source of the school's common ideals, and a general analysis of